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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MEDIA REACTION TO TALKS BETWEEN
SECRETARY CLINTON AND FOREIGN MINISTER OKADA IN
HONOLULU ON JANUARY 13

1.SUMMARY: Japanese media outlets gave extensive coverage to the meeting between Secretary Clinton and Foreign Minister Okada in Honolulu on January 12. The Japanese media noted that no progress was made on resolving the issue of Futenma relocation, but welcomed the meeting as the starting point of talks to deepen the bilateral alliance. They did, however, caution that strengthening the alliance will be difficult in the absence of a solution to the Futenma issue. END SUMMARY

2.Media outlets extensively covered the meeting between Secretary Clinton and Foreign Minister Okada in Honolulu on January 12. All networks reported on the meeting in their morning, noon, and evening news programs, and newspapers published front-page stories in their evening editions, followed by editorials and inside-page analytical pieces on the next day.

¶3. Media outlets were unanimous in reporting that the meeting failed to bridge the rift between the two countries over the Futenma issue. It "has merely been shelved," said a news article with commentary in the Asahi. Still, news organizations stressed the commitment Okada made in the meeting that the Japanese government would reach a decision on the relocation of the airfield by May of this year. Apropos of this commitment the Mainichi newspaper editorialized that "settling the Futenma issue by May has now become a formal promise between the governments of Japan and the United States."

¶4. Nevertheless, the Japanese media welcomed the meeting for several reasons. Foremost was that the two nations' top diplomats agreed to launch consultations to deepen the bilateral alliance. "That was diplomatically wise to prevent bilateral relations from deteriorating further," wrote the Nikkei in an

editorial. Another reason was the ministers' confirmation that the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee would meet in the first half of the year and that both nations would issue statements marking the 50th anniversary of the bilateral security treaty's revision. These were, according to a Mainichi editorial, "measures to prevent the alliance from becoming even shakier." One commentator, journalist Ryuichi Teshima, even found significance in the simple fact that the meeting was held. He said on a TV-Asahi infotainment program on January 13 that the U.S. agreed to hold the meeting because of the danger other nations would attempt to exploit a situation in which dialogue between the world's two largest economies was frozen. "Holding a foreign ministers' meeting in Hawaii now is significant in and of itself," he concluded.

¶5. But the media cautioned that "deepening" the bilateral alliance will be difficult in the absence of an agreement on a replacement for the Futenma airfield. An Asahi editorial noted: "The Futenma issue is only one part of the alliance, but if the Hatoyama administration does not undergo the difficult process of finding a solution acceptable to both sides, it will be difficult to discuss the alliance's future." The same Asahi article cited earlier said that "the Futenma issue is closely linked to USFJ realignment plans. ...It is unclear whether the talks to deepen the Japan-U.S. alliance that were launched in effect at the Okada-Clinton talks will lead to a new security declaration."

TOKYO 00000096 002 OF 002

On a similar note Fuji-TV opined that unless the thorny issue of Futenma is resolved, holding talks on deepening the alliance will be tantamount to just going through the motions.

ZUMWALT